

Overland-Tandberg's RDX® QuikStor™ complements cloud data integrity at children's day nurseries

Supplementary data backup required to patch hole in SMB Cloud.



The Situation

The Angmering Day Nurseries Ltd are privately owned day nurseries operating across three branches on the South Coast of England in Hove, Angmering and shortly to be opened, Horsham. The nurseries run under the strict ethos of providing outstanding, quality childcare with over 120 places for children from birth to five years old, the nurseries employ a team of around 45 practitioners, all dedicated to providing utmost quality care for the child. Child development, staff development and general business information held throughout the company is securely and scrupulously maintained.

In the daily operation of the nurseries, a large amount of information is collected and stored. Information can be classified into two categories - essential business operating data to support the day-to-day running of the business (including accounts, staff resourcing and scheduling, purchasing and ordering) and more critical support information for the ongoing welfare of the attending children (including vital contact details for parents, critical medical, dietary and special needs or inclusion information, together with individual child progress records and supporting documentation).

Will Pointon is the Managing Director of the Angmering Day Nurseries and he takes up the story. "We provide the first steps in a child's independence outside of the home and their ongoing care and development is our utmost priority. In an environment as tightly regulated as childcare, it's important that we stay in total control of our data and the child's. As with most small businesses, we do not have dedicated IT resources at each branch, so it's down to the practitioners and the nursery managers to accurately record the progress of each child, whilst the management team secures staff and business information. Therefore, ease of use and robust data capture methods are essential in this environment."

Solution Overview

The Angmering Day Nursery
For Little People with...Big Ideas!



1 central server

9 desktops

3 laptops

6 digital cameras

1 TDX QuikStor system
with 500GB media

120GB total data storage

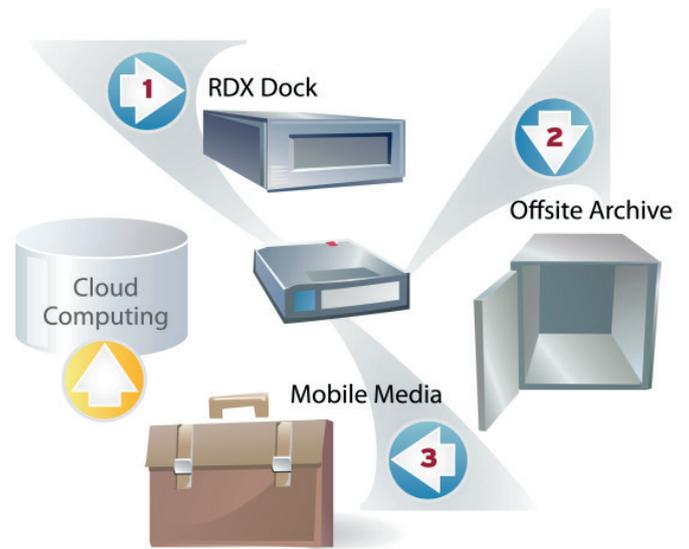
Google Cloud Connect

The Environment: Into the SMB Cloud

Within the company, there is one central server, 9 desktops, 3 laptops and 6 digital cameras all taking and recording essential information. In total, data volumes amount to around 120GB. Data is growing exponentially at around 40 percent year on year, as further technology and applications are embraced and as the business expands its child place allocation. Indeed the amount of data captured on the companies' digital cameras alone has increased by 100 percent, thanks to the volume and quality of digital images captured throughout each session on high definition cameras that record the children's ongoing displays, work, and use of role play areas.

One server held at the Hove nursery acts as a central data store for essential business operating data whilst child related information is held on machines securely housed within each setting and all other machines replicate their essential business operating data via email. This provides the management team with a timed/dated and searchable record of all internal communications. In addition, the nurseries are all connected via Google Apps, selected 18 months ago, to offer the company communication and collaboration tools including online document sharing so that learning environments and files can be shared across branches. This includes calendar sharing for staff planning and resourcing and Google 'Cloud Connect'-the application that allows small businesses secure online backup into the cloud.

Will explains, "We were initially enticed to look at web-based, or cloud computing, due to significant cost savings and productivity leaps we could make without having to maintain traditional networked hardware devices. Within our cloud-based environment, for a low annual fee, our business applications are delivered anywhere that has the Internet and are accessed via a web browser. The applications and resultant data are then stored centrally within the cloud, meaning that we are no longer concerned about providing IT support and securing individual devices, as our laptops, desktops and even iPhones, are now viewed simply as extra portals to access data."



Holes in the Cloud begin to gather

Like lots of small businesses without dedicated IT resources, Will appreciated that the notion of cloud computing and storage offered his business a distinct competitive edge; however, ongoing use across 18 months highlighted issues frequently referred to, and documented as, 'Holes in the Cloud,'

"At first it was more of an inconvenience, slight delays and taking just a few minutes to access services, upload and retrieve information. As time progressed and our data set grew larger, we noticed significant downtime periods of Google, one of which scaled into nine hours. That's an entire nursery day, so we had no option but to switch back to the manual process, retrieving files from the direct-attached storage on the main server."

Like all cloud providers, Google strives to improve service levels as the web technology matures. One restriction outside of their control is that their service can only be as good as the supporting bandwidth pipe allows and with the present limited standard bandwidth available on the South Coast, data retrieval times are unlikely to significantly improve short term. Again, should the service provider fail (BT in this case), the nurseries would remain without data. Therefore it was becoming obvious that the nurseries needed a hybrid solution to capitalise on the cloud that would ultimately provide a watertight mix of web-based computing, but with fast, disk-based backup and retrieval of information locally.



Now that the RDX QuikStor is installed, the nurseries have the capability to simply restore from the RDX system in the event of server failure or cloud outage. The company feels able to confidently draw information from cloud applications onto the server, so all business data is now entrusted to the RDX technology. Will surmises, “The RDX system from Overland-Tandberg has given total peace of mind that we are now operating with the best of all technologies but at a great price point per GB. We cannot operate within OFSTED guidelines with permanent and easy access to all the vital information about the children in our care, so being able to demonstrate full compliance, with little ongoing effort, is significant.” (OFSTED is the UK governing regulatory body for all children’s education.)

Plugging the Cloud: RDX QuikStor

The management team started the process of identifying a fast access, secure, automated backup and recovery solution that was resilient enough to withstand the wear and tear of a nursery environment and could easily be used by practitioners who are dedicated to childcare, not IT provision. In reality, backing up locally is a familiar concept to the management team, given that, prior to the cloud, storage was attached via a NAS device run off the central server. This time around, to improve on the automation and reliability, Will wanted to employ a total “set and forget” solution that was fast, rugged and ultra reliable.

They found the bridge they were looking for with Overland-Tandberg’s RDX QuikStor and 500GB RDX cartridge - a solution that combines the simplicity of direct-attached storage with the speed and flexibility of hard disk. Will continues. “What we liked about the RDX system from Overland-Tandberg in testing was that it was extremely easy to implement and run - a total plug-and-play solution with automated, seamless backup and recovery, leaving us to focus on what we do best - outstanding childcare.”

The resultant RDX QuikStor was in place by the beginning of 2011. It comes with an easy-to-use software application, AccuGuard, which provides 20:1 data deduplication designed to increase effective storage capacity. Data retrieval is simple and painless with AccuGuard’s flexible file searching, drag-and-drop restore and point-in-time disaster recovery.



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Managing Director, Angmering Day Nurseries

At the end of each day, the RDX cartridges are seamlessly slipped into the managing director’s briefcase and transported home; their ruggedized casing withstanding all vibrations, movement and rough handling for the next ten years. Retrieval is fully automated and seamless. “Tandberg Data’s AccuGuard just kicks in and does it all for us - to say data retrieval is lightning fast is an understatement, it’s there, each and every time, instantaneously. Through the combination of Google Apps and Overland-Tandberg RDX, we have achieved the ultimate hybrid solution that plugs every hole that cloud computing currently presents to small businesses like ours,” Will concludes.



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